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(54) Title: DESTRUCTION OF PRIONS USING VIBRIOLYSIN OR VARIANTS THEREOF

(57) Abstract: The present invention provides a method of reducing the activity of prions using vibriolysin or variants thereof. Vibriolysin-containing solutions are used to sanitize prion-contaminated facilities and instruments and decontaminate food products and biological tissues. The present invention provides a method of treating prion-related disease in animals and humans, comprising the administration of a formulation of vibriolysin or a variant thereof together with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier. Such novel formulations are engineered to track the natural path of the prion from cells where the prions accumulate in the preclinical stage into neuronal cells and the brain at the advanced stage of the disease. The present invention provides methods and formulations that encompasses natural and recombinant vibriolysins and variants thereof with enhanced ability to access prion target cells, and with enzyme activity capable of being regulated by specific conditions, such as pH range or enzymatic cleavage.

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DESTRUCTION OF PRIONS USING VIBRIOLYSIN OR VARIANTS THEREOF**TECHNICAL FIELD**

5 This invention relates to a method of reducing the activity of infectious prions using
vibriolysin or variants thereof. The present invention thereby provides a method of sanitization
against prion-contaminated facilities and equipment and elimination of residual prions from
prion-contaminated food products and biological tissues. The invention further provides a
method of treatment of prion-related disease in animals and humans and novel formulations of
10 compositions comprising vibriolysin.

RELATED APPLICATIONS

 This application is a non-provisional application derived from U.S. Provisional
Application Serial No. 60/291,665, filed May 16, 2001.

15

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

 In 1985 two reports described the purification of scrapie infectivity from an infected
hamster brain, which comprised a fraction, highly enriched with a protein of an estimated *Mr*
28,000 to 30,000. The proteinacious infectivity entity was given the controversial designation
20 "prion." (McGeoch, *et al.*, *J. Gen. Virol.* 67:813-830 (1986)) Prions have now been defined as
small proteinacious infectious particles that resist inactivation by procedures which affect
nucleic acids, and are composed mainly of a proteinacious infective entity, referred to as PrP^{Sc}.
The PrP gene of mammals expresses a soluble protein, PrP^C, which can be converted to an
insoluble form, PrP^{Sc}. Prion diseases result from the transformation of the normal form of prion
25 protein (PrP^C) into the abnormal form (PrP^{Sc}) by a yet undefined post-translational event. PrP^C
is bound to the external surface of cells by a glycoinositol phospholipid anchor, whereas PrP^{Sc}
accumulates within cytoplasmic vesicles of cultured cells. Although there are no detectable
differences between the amino acid sequences of the normal and disease forms of the prion
protein, PrP^{Sc} has a conformation with a higher beta sheet and lower alpha-helix content
30 (Gabizon and Prusiner, *Biochem. J.* 266:1-14 (1990); Prusiner, *Science* 252:1522 (1991);
Prusiner, *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 6(6):663-665 (1993); Pan, *et al.*, *Proc. Natl.*
Acad. Sci. USA 90:10962-10966 (1993); Safax, *et al.*, *J. Biol. Chem.* 268:20276-20284 (1993)).

The presence of the abnormal PrP^{Sc} form in the brains of infected humans and animals is the only disease-specific diagnostic marker of prion disease. The PrP^{Sc} form mediates both the transmission and pathogenesis of prion diseases, including spongiform encephalopathies and plays a key role in neuronal degeneration (Prusiner, In: *The Molecular and Genetic Basis of Neurological Disease*, 2nd Edition, pp. 103-143 (1997)). Prion diseases, such as scrapie, are characterized by abnormal processes of assembly and disassembly of normally soluble proteins into conformationally altered proteins in a defined, insoluble state. Other examples of insoluble proteins include the A beta peptide in amyloid plaques of Alzheimer's disease and cerebral amyloid angiopathy (CAA), alpha synuclein deposits in Lewy bodies of Parkinson's disease, Tau in neurofibrillary tangles in frontal temporal dementia and Pick's disease, superoxide dismutase in amyotrophic and lateral sclerosis, and huntington in Huntington's disease (Glenner, *et al.*, *J. Neurol. Sci.* 92:1-28 (1989); Haan, *et al.*, *Clin. Neurol. Neurosurg.* 92(4):305-310 (1990)).

In addition to causing scrapie in sheep, prions are known to cause bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle (also known as "mad cow disease"). In humans, prions also cause kuru disease in humans which cannibalizes the human brain, a genetically inherited form called Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker Syndrome (GSS), and forms of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) (Haseltine and Patarca, *Nature* 323(6084):115-116 (1986); Bazan, *et al.*, *Nature* 325:581 (1987); Chatigny and Prusiner, *Reviews Infectious Diseases* 2(5):713-724 (1980); Prusiner, *Science* 216:136-144 (1982); McGeoch, *et al.*, *J. Gen. Virol.* 67:813-830 (1986); Manuelidis, *et al.*, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 92:5124-5128 (1995); Prusiner, *Science* 278:245-251 (1997)). Recently, Supattapone, *et al.* (*Mol. Cell. Biol.* 21(7):2608-2616 (2001)) modified an abridged prion protein designated as PrP106 producing a 61-residue peptide, designated as PrP61. Transgenic mice expressing this PrP61 died spontaneously with ataxia and accumulated PrP61 within their neuronal dendrites and cell bodies.

Although prion infection directly by injection into the brain is most efficient in producing a pronounced disease state, oral ingestion of prions can also cause disease with lower frequency and prolonged duration of onset in animal models. Recently, it has become clear that the feeding of supplements comprising scrapie-infected sheep meat to cattle has led to infection of 177,490 animals in United Kingdom with a bovine form of prion disease (Donnelly, *Nature* 408:787-788 (2000)). The disease has spread to a lesser extent to France and other European countries. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that prions from different species infect the same species most efficiently, but can cross a species barrier with decreased efficiency. It is

now recognized that the human consumption of infected beef has led to a variant form of CJD (vCJD) in British citizens who consumed infected beef. It is possible that thousands of British and other European citizens are carrying prions in a preclinical state and will develop vCJD after some years of incubation. These findings, including the recent confirmation linking vCJD with BSE, therefore are the basis for the current concerns regarding the risks of acquiring human vCJD from eating infected beef (Roberts, *et al.*, *Curr. Biol.* 6(10):1247-9 (1996); Collinge, *Lancet* 354(9175):317-323 (1999); Bruce, *et al.*, *Immunology Today* 21:442-445 (2000); Donnelly, *Nature* 408:787-788 (2000)).

When prions enter the body via a peripheral route, they accumulate in the lymphoreticular tissues before moving through the nerves into the spinal cord or brain stem, and then to the brain. A hallmark of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) is the accumulation in nervous and lymphoid tissues of PrP^{Sc}. Prions ingested orally enter the body via follicular dendritic cells (FDCs) of the germinal centers within the reticuloendothelial system. Studies have shown that the FDCs of the germinal centers of the spleen, lymph nodes and Peyer's patches play an important role in the pathogenesis of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). These cells normally function to capture native antigen and present processed forms of antigens to B cells (Cardone and Pocchiari, *Nature Medicine* 7(4):410-411 (2001); Bruce, *et al.*, *Immunology Today* 21:442-445 (2000)).

Studies have shown that the complement system is involved in the uptake of prions, replication in the lymphoreticular system and CNS invasion (Cardone and Pocchiari, *Nature Medicine* 7(4):410-411 (2001)). The complement system comprises serum proteins that can be activated by antibody-antigen complexes or the surface of microorganisms to undergo a cascade of proteolytic reactions resulting in the assembly of membrane attack complexes. Complement factors also enhance the ability of phagocytic cells to bind, ingest, and destroy the microorganisms subject to attack. In the normal humoral immune response, the antibody-antigen complex binds to Fc-gamma receptors and becomes covalently linked to complement adducts. These linked complexes then bind to the complement receptors to trigger antigen destruction. Depletion of either one of the early complement factors or the complement receptor significantly delays onset of disease symptoms in mice with scrapie, splenic accumulation of the pathological prion protein, and infectivity. Prions may bind to complement factors and the resulting prion-complement factor complex would then be captured by FDCs through complement receptors. Thus, the complement system may play an important role in opsonizing prion particles and enhancing complement receptor-mediated uptake into the FDCs.

Prions in the FDCs may then incubate preclinically, increasing in concentration before being transported to the brain by FDCs or some type of white blood cell. (Cardone and Pocchiari, *Nature Medicine* 7(4):410-411 (2001); Mabbott, *et al.*, *Nature Medicine* 4(7):485-487 (2001); Klein, *et al.*, *Nature Medicine* 7(4):488-492 (2001)).

- 5 The properties of these protease resistant prions contribute to their stability and, hence, difficulty in their breakdown and elimination. Prions contain prion protein fragments of 208 amino acids in their murine form, though smaller fragments can generate prions. The prion protein contains two carbohydrate side chains and a glycoposphatidyl-inositol anchor, a lipid tail that inserts into the membrane. Prions are resistant to heat, detergent and to highly potent
- 10 proteases such as proteinase K. The prion protein is very hydrophobic and forms β -pleated sheet structures, which make it difficult to digest. It is unclear whether autoclaving is sufficient to eliminate the prions. Given the risks of contacting and ingesting this very resistant particle, a method to reliably destroy or remove the prion, or counteract the adverse actions of prions, would be highly desirable (Supattapone, *et al.*, *Mol. Cell. Biol.* 21(7):2608-2616 (2001);
- 15 Chatigny and Prusiner, *Reviews of Infectious Diseases* 2(5):713-724 (1980)).

- U.S. Patent No. 6,214,366 B1 discloses a method of arresting, preventing, and/or reversing the impairment of physiologic systems by reducing the burden of insoluble protein deposits using branched polycationic agents, such as dendritic polycations, or pharmaceutical compositions containing such branched polycationic agents. The method of enhancing the
- 20 clearance of PrP^{Sc} from cells comprises administering a pharmaceutical composition comprising an unconjugated dendritic polycation with a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient. However, such a method may not be effective in the complete elimination of the infectious prion particles. U.S. Patent No. 5,756,678 discloses a method for the treatment of connective tissue materials, such as collagen, for the inactivation of prions to obtain at least 5 logs of
- 25 protection, comprising contacting the liquid solution of connective tissue material with sodium hydroxides that the sodium hydroxide in said solution ranges from 0.1 M-0.7 M for a period of time sufficient to inactivate the prions without adversely affecting the function of connective tissue at a temperature of 25° C or less. This method is impractical for use *in vivo* and the requirement of sufficient exposure to high concentrations of sodium hydroxide may be
- 30 damaging to some tissue transplants.

Schroder, *et al.*, (*Neurotoxicology* 19(4-5):683-688 (1998)) studied mechanisms of prion^{Sc}-induced neuronal cell death and found that NMDA receptor antagonists blocked the effect of PrP^{Sc} to induce apoptosis in rat cortical neurons. In addition to inducing apoptosis,

PrP106-126 caused a significant drop in the intracellular glutathione (GSH) level in neuronal cells. GSH together with the proto-oncogene product Bcl-2 protects neuronal cells against apoptotic cell death, possibly through lowering the load of reactive oxygen species (ROS) within cells. Thus, agents which lower the load of ROS in cells may counteract the apoptotic effects of prions. Supattapone, *et al.* (*J. Virol.* 75(7):3453-3461 (2001)) showed that branched polyamines *in vitro* disaggregated the prion rods, reduced the beta sheet content of PrP 27-30, and rendered PrP 27-30 susceptible to proteolysis in scrapie-infected neuroblastoma cells in culture. However, the susceptibility of PrP^{Sc} to proteolytic digestion induced by branched polyamines was strain-dependent, wherein PrP^{Sc} from bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected brain but not PrP^{Sc} from natural sheep scrapie-infected brain were susceptible. Since the branched polyamines accumulated specifically in the lysosomes, this acidic compartment is believed to be the site where these agents mediate PrP^{Sc} clearance.

Vibriolysin is a proteolytic enzyme secreted by the Gram-negative marine microorganism, *Vibrio proteolyticus*. This endoprotease has specific affinity for the hydrophobic regions of proteins and is capable of cleaving proteins adjacent to hydrophobic amino acids. Since the interior portions of proteins are usually hydrophobic, vibriolysin is a potent protease useful in cleaving denatured and hydrophobic proteins and is active over a wide range of pH and temperature conditions (Durham, *et al.*, *J. Burn Care Rehabil.* 14(5): 544-51 (1993)). The gene (*nprV*) which codes for the extracellular neutral protease, vibriolysin (*NprV*), was isolated from a *V. proteolyticus* DNA library constructed in *Escherichia coli*. The nucleotide sequence of the cloned *nprV* gene revealed an open reading frame encoding 609 amino acids including a putative signal peptide sequence followed by a long "pro" sequence consisting of 171 amino acids. The mature *NprV* purified from cultures of *V. proteolyticus* was compared to the sequences of the neutral proteases from *Bacillus thermolyticus* (thermolysin) and *Bacillus stearothermophilus* and extensive regions of conserved homology were identified, including active-site residues, zinc-binding residues and calcium-binding sites. (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112(1):107-112 (1992)). The DNA sequence of the vibriolysin gene (SEQ ID. NO. 1) is shown in Figure 2. The DNA sequence shown comprises a portion of a 6.7 kb *Hind III* fragment of the *Vibrio proteolyticus* gene, which is described in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,966,846 and 5,505,943. There is an open reading frame from approximately base 249-2078, within which the DNA region encoding vibriolysin is found. This DNA sequence encodes a protease isolated from the *Vibrio* strain *Vibrio proteolyticus* ATCC 53559. Such vibriolysin protease is known by several designations, including vibriolysin (DBSource pir: locus JT0903, EC 3.4.24.-)

precursor – *Vibrio proteolyticus*; neutral protease precursor (Vibriolysin) (Aeromonolysin)(DBSource swissprot: locus NPRV_VIBPR, accession 000971, EC_number="3.4.24.25"; and neutral protease [*Vibrio proteolyticus*] (DBSource locus VIBNEUP accession M64809.1) (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112:107-112 (1992)). Other vibriolysins

5 have been previously described, and include: (1) virulence metalloprotease precursor (Vibriolysin) (Milton, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 174(22):7235-7244 (1992); Norqvist, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(11):3731-3736 (1990)); (2) hemagglutinin/proteinase precursor (HA/Protease) (Vibriolysin) (Hase, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 173(11):3311-3317 (1991); Heidelberg, *et al.*, *Nature* 406(6795):477-483(2000); Hase, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(12):4011-4015 (1990)); (3)

10 vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor [validated] – *Vibrio cholerae* (group O1 strain N16961) (Hase, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(12):4011-4015 (1990)); Hase, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 173(11):3311-3317 (1991); Heidelberg, *et al.*, *Nature* 406(6795):477-483 (2000)); (4) zinc metalloproteinase (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Legionella pneumophila* (Black, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 172(5):2608-2613 (1990)); (5) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio vulnificus* (Cheng, *et al.*, *Gene* 183(1-

15 2):255-257 (1996)); and (6) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio anguillarum* (Norqvist, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(11):3731-3736 (1990); Milton, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 174(22):7235-7244 (1992)).

Vibriolysin has been shown to be particularly beneficial for debridement of burn wound eschar. *In vitro* experiments showed that vibriolysin was effective in hydrolyzing proteinacious

20 components of eschar, including denatured fibrin, elastin and collagen. Vibriolysin exhibited desirable properties including selective hydrolysis of dead but not viable tissues, debridement in the absence of bleeding, compatibility with adjunct therapies and shelf-life stability in a hydrophilic composition at room temperature. Furthermore, vibriolysin was shown to stimulate granulation tissue or neodermis, and thereby, may have beneficial effects on dermal repair

25 processes (Durham, *et al.*, *J. Burn Care Rehabil.* 14(5):544-51 (1993); Nanney, *et al.*, *Wound Rep. Reg.* 3:442-8 (1995)). U.S. Patent Nos. 5,145,681 and 5,505,943 and International Application No. WO 98/55604 teach compositions for debriding wounds, comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable topical carrier admixed with an effective amount of a protease, which may be produced by: (1) a microorganism from the genus *Vibrio*, or (2) expression by

30 recombinant host cells transformed or transfected with an expression vector for a protease produced by a microorganism from the genus *Vibrio*; or mutants and hybrids thereof. Unlike other proteolytic agents contemplated for use in debriding wounds and shown to be ineffective

and toxic systemically and locally, vibriolysin was shown to have superior characteristics including debridement properties and the ability to promote wound healing.

It is now and herein postulated that because of the propensity of vibriolysins to degrade hydrophobic proteins, vibriolysin serves as an excellent candidate for a protease capable of
5 destroying the prion protein by proteolytic cleavage of infectious prion particles. In other words, vibriolysin is characterized by properties consistent with the ability to degrade prions when the enzyme is formulated as a disinfectant solution for cleaning or sanitizing equipment and surfaces, or as a therapeutic for the treatment of prion-associated or prion-like diseases in animals and humans.

10

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

One aspect of the invention relates to a composition capable of reducing the infectivity of prion, comprising vibriolysin or a variant thereof in an amount effective to reduce the infectivity
15 of prion, and one or more cleaning adjunct materials. Another aspect of the invention relates to a DNA sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant thereof, wherein said vibriolysin or a variant thereof has the ability to gain access to target sites that accumulate prions within the body.

Still another aspect of the invention relates to a method of reducing the activity of infectious prions, comprising the step of contacting a vibriolysin protease or variant thereof with
20 said prions in an amount effective to cleave or degrade said prions or destroy their infective activity.

An important aspect of the invention relates to a method of sanitizing facilities or instruments contaminated with prions comprising the step of contacting said prions with a solution comprising a vibriolysin protease or variant thereof in an amount effective to reduce or
25 eradicate prion contamination of said instruments and facilities.

Yet another aspect of the invention relates to a method of treating or preventing a prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases in a subject or biological tissue in need thereof comprising administering to said subject a formulation of a pharmaceutical composition comprising a vibriolysin protease or variant thereof with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier
30 in an amount effective to treat or prevent said prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases.

In other words, the present invention provides a method of reducing the activity of prions using vibriolysin or a variant of the protease.

An important embodiment of the present invention provides a means of sanitizing actual or potentially prion-contaminated facilities and instruments. Yet another embodiment of the present invention is the decontamination of human and animal food products and nutritional supplements with formulations of vibriolysin to eliminate residual prions. Another embodiment is the decontamination of tissues used in human transplantation such as collagen tendons or bone grafts.

The present invention provides for a method of treating or preventing a prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases in a subject or biological tissue in need thereof comprising: administering to said subject a formulation of a pharmaceutical composition comprising a vibriolysin protease or variant thereof with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier in an amount effective to treat or prevent said prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases.

More specifically, the present invention provides a method of treating prion-related diseases in animals and humans, including, but not limited to, scrapie, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), kuru disease, Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker Syndrome (GSS), and forms of Creutzfeld-Jacob (CJD) disease.

A preferred embodiment is a method of treating prion-related diseases at the preclinical stage, wherein prions incubating within follicular dendritic cells (FDCs) or other cells are cleaved by vibriolysin or variants thereof when taken up by the prion-infected cells. The method comprises administering a formulation of a pharmaceutical composition comprising vibriolysin or variant thereof, together with a pharmaceutically-acceptable carrier.

The present invention provides for novel formulations of vibriolysin and variants thereof, which enhance the capability of the enzyme to track the natural path of the prion from oral ingestion to cells where the prions accumulate in the preclinical stage to the movement of prions into neuronal cells and the brain at the advanced stage of the disease. Such novel formulations and various routes of administration are described. Another preferred embodiment is the treatment of prion-related diseases at the advanced stage, when prions have infected neuronal cells and the brain.

The present invention provides novel formulations of vibriolysin capable of transport across the blood brain barrier and uptake into neuronal cells and lysosomes where prions accumulate at the advanced stage.

The present invention also provides novel formulations of vibriolysin wherein its enzyme activity is regulated by changes in conditions such as pH or by exposure to proteolytic enzymes.

Another embodiment of the present invention is a DNA sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant thereof engineered to enhance access of the enzyme to target sites of prions, such as uptake into cells (e.g. FDCs) or organelles (lysosomes) which accumulate prions, or transport across the blood brain barrier. Yet another embodiment of the present invention is a DNA
5 sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant thereof, engineered to transform from an inactive to active form upon exposure to specific conditions, such as a change in pH, temperature, chemical composition, or concentration, or to proteolytic enzymes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

10 Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a formulation of vibriolysin and its administration and action. In this representation, active vibriolysin is portrayed as a cube, but vibriolysin may also be formulated in a pro- or inactive form.

1. The active Vibrio is aggregated or crystallized to form an accumulation of vibriolysin molecules, with the particle size dependent on the properties necessary for
15 complement activation and also dependent on the necessary properties of stability and bioavailability. The vibriolysin in this aggregate is relatively inactive against proteins since such proteins are inaccessible to the enzyme in the crystal.

2. In order to assist in stabilizing and maintaining the aggregate for purposes of surviving other proteases and conditions in the digestive tract, the aggregate is cross-linked with
20 a multi-crosslinking agent. For example, glutaraldehyde 0.2% is a multi-crosslinking agent with a short period of exposure, for example. The crystal or aggregate does not readily redissolve at neutral pH.

3. The crosslinked aggregate or crystal is lipidated by attaching fatty acids or other similar hydrophobic chains to hydroxyls or other moieties exposed on the protein. Sufficient
25 lipid is added to create a membrane-like surface which results in three features: (1) solubility of the enzyme in fats, thereby enhancing absorption into the lacteals and local lymph, whereby the fat containing the particle is absorbed similar to prion uptake; (2) creation, by lipidation of the particle, of the appearance of a foreign membrane to trigger the activation of complement and opsonization of the particle for uptake by white cells such as FDCs; and (3) maintenance of the
30 enzyme in an inactive state within the lipid until the breakdown of the lipid layer by acid lipases within the lysosome.

4. The lipidated, crosslinked particle is administered orally in oil or within a fatty meal, wherein the vibriolysin particle enters the lymph system and is transported into lymph cells or the circulation. The lipid surface immediately activates complement.

5. The activated complement components binds and opsonizes the particle, which is then transported into FDCs or similar cells by complement receptor-mediated uptake.

6. The lipid coat is removed by the acid lipases or as a result of changes in pH, thereby exposing the crystal aggregate to the conditions of the lysosome.

7. The conditions within the lysosome trigger the disassembly of the aggregate and the slow dissolution of the vibriolysin.

10 8. The re-dissolved vibriolysin digests hydrophobic protein aggregates, and is formulated into a concentration and stability such that the enzyme activity diminishes over a specific duration.

Any part of the scheme may be modified or excluded to enhance the specific objective of reaching the site of prion storage, wherein the prion becomes activated. Activation of the prion remains restricted to such sites of prion storage.

Figure 2 shows the DNA sequence of the vibriolysin gene (SEQ ID. NO. 1), and comprises a portion of a 6.7 kb Hind III fragment of the *Vibrio proteolyticus* gene, which is described in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,966,846 and 5,505,943. There is an open reading frame from approximately base 249-2078, within which the DNA region encoding vibriolysin is found.

20 This DNA sequence encodes a protease isolated from the *Vibrio* strain *Vibrio proteolyticus* ATCC 53559. This vibriolysin protease is known by several designations, including vibriolysin (DBSource pir: locus JT0903, EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio proteolyticus*; neutral protease precursor (Vibriolysin) (Aeromonolysin)(DBSource swissprot: locus NPRV_VIBPR, accession 000971, EC_number="3.4.24.25"; and neutral protease (*Vibrio proteolyticus*) (DBSource locus

25 VIBNEUP accession M64809.1) (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112:107-112 (1992)).

Figure 3 depicts the digestion of prion protein derived from variant Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease (vCJD) brain by vibriolysin. Figure 3A depicts the X-ray film of a Western blot analysis of the digestion of prion containing vCJD brain with increasing concentrations of Vibriolysin as indicated at the temp of 20°C. Figure 3B depicts the X-ray film of a Western blot analysis of the digestion of a prion extracts by Vibriolysin at the temp of 40°C. In both

30 Figure 3A and 3B, the highest concentration of Vibriolysin reduced prion content about 10 fold after digestion for 1 hour. The conditions were not the optimal ones for Vibriolysin and therefore better digestion would be expected at higher pH and higher temp.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method of reducing the infectious activity of prions using vibriolysin or a variant thereof. Preferably, the biologic activity of the infectious prions or
5 the structure of the infectious prions is destroyed.

Vibriolysin is an endoprotease that is capable of cleaving proteins within hydrophobic regions. As a potent protease, vibriolysin can cleave denatured proteins and maintain activity over a wide range of pH and temperature conditions. Because of its propensity to degrade hydrophobic proteins, vibriolysin serves as an excellent candidate for a protease capable of
10 destroying the prion protein by proteolytically cleaving the infectious prion particles. Given the wide range of conditions over which the protease is active, including extreme alkaline conditions (pH 10-14) in which most proteins are solubilized, it would be expected that vibriolysin could be formulated in a solution which would dissolve all proteins and proteolytically cleave the infectious prions.

15 An advantage of the present invention is that use of vibriolysin or variant thereof for cleansing and decontamination purposes is preferably over the use of chemicals, such as bleach, for reducing the infectivity or destroying infectious prion particles because the vibriolysin or variant thereof is itself not caustic or harmful to human and livestock.

The present invention also provides a protein variant of vibriolysin with activity and
20 properties, which can degrade the prion protein. A variant of the vibriolysin protease encompasses endoproteases capable of: (1) cleaving proteins within hydrophobic regions and maintaining activity over a wide range of pH and temperature conditions; and (2) having an amino acid sequence comprising the active site residues. A variant can be naturally occurring or man-made. A list of naturally occurring vibriolysin variants is discussed above. A man-
25 made variant vibriolysin can comprise substitutions of one or more amino acid of any naturally occurring vibriolysin variant. One skilled in the art can, using standard site-directed mutagenesis procedures, make a variant vibriolysin with an amino acid sequence that is not found in nature, and test its ability to cleave prion proteins (see Example). In this manner, amino acids that are essential (substitutions at amino acid positions resulting in the variants' complete ability to cleave prion proteins) and those that are non-essential (substitutions at
30 amino acid positions resulting in the variants' increased, unaltered, or reduced, but not a complete reduction, ability to cleave prion proteins) can be determined. The present invention encompasses variant vibriolysins with one or more amino acid substitutions at non-essential

amino acid positions. Similarly, using the method outlined above, the deletion of and/or insertion of amino acids into vibriolysin can determine other variants that retain activity to cleave prion proteins. Typically, the variant of the vibriolysin protease will have at least 90% homology, preferably at least 95%, and more preferably at least 98% homology to the natural
5 vibriolysin protease.

The method of the present invention encompasses the use of natural vibriolysin produced and secreted by *Vibrio* and vibriolysin produced by recombinant methods and variants of both natural and recombinant vibriolysin thereof. Vibriolysin proteins which have been previously described include: (1) virulence metalloprotease precursor (Vibriolysin) (Milton, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 174(22):7235-7244 (1992); Norqvist, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(11):3731-3736 (1990)); (2) hemagglutinin/proteinase precursor (HA/Protease) (Vibriolysin) (Hase, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 173(11):3311-3317 (1991); Heidelberg, *et al.*, *Nature* 406(6795):477-483(2000); Hase, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(12):4011-4015 (1990)); (3) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor [validated] – *Vibrio cholerae* (group O1 strain N16961) (Hase, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(12):4011-4015 (1990)); Hase, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 173(11):3311-3317 (1991); Heidelberg, *et al.*, *Nature* 406(6795):477-483 (2000)); (4) zinc metalloproteinase (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Legionella pneumophila* (Black, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 172(5):2608-2613 (1990)); (5) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio vulnificus* (Cheng, *et al.*, *Gene* 183(1-2):255-257 (1996)); (6) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio anguillarum* (Norqvist, *et al.*, *Infect. Immun.* 58(11):3731-3736 (1990); Milton, *et al.*, *J. Bacteriol.* 174(22):7235-7244 (1992)); (7) vibriolysin (EC 3.4.24.-) precursor – *Vibrio proteolyticus* (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112(1):107-112 (1992)); (8) neutral protease precursor (Vibriolysin) (Aeromonolysin) (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112(1):107-112(1992)); and (9) neutral protease [*Vibrio proteolyticus*] (David, *et al.*, *Gene* 112:107-112 (1992)).

An important embodiment of the present invention provides for a method of sanitation of prion-contaminated facilities and/or instruments. For sanitizing solutions, the enzyme stability and activity of vibriolysin protease is highly desirable. For example, vibriolysin may be formulated in an alkaline solution of pH 10-14 which will assist in solubilizing proteins and lipids for cleaning and allow the destruction of prions effectively. Disinfectant solution
30 comprising vibriolysin or variants thereof can be used to sanitize surgical or meat preparation instruments in order to eradicate residual prions. Disinfectant solutions may also be used to sanitize work surfaces or rooms to prevent accumulation or transfer of prions. Yet another embodiment of the present invention is the treatment of human and animal food products and

nutritional supplements, such as protein solutions or other compounds, with formulations comprising vibriolysin, to eliminate residual prions. For example, a casein hydrolysate or animal food supplements could be further proteolyzed with vibriolysin to eliminate any possible residual prions. A further embodiment of the present invention is the decontamination of tissues used in human transplantation such as collagen tendons or bone grafts. A nationwide survey in Japan reported forty-three cases of CJD with cadaveric dura transplantation by May 1996 (Nakamura, *et al.*, *Neurology* 53(1):218-20 (1999)). The risk of prion-infected corneal donor appearing in the donor pool was predicted to be 0.045 cases per year, and increased to 2.12 cases per year for potential corneal donation if the data are corrected for age and for possible infected but asymptomatic CJD patients (Hogan, *et al.*, *Cornea* 18(1):2-11 (1999)). Thus, formulations of vibriolysin and variants thereof would be beneficial in the decontamination of tissues and organs used for transplantation.

The present invention also provides novel methods and formulations for preventing and treating a variety of prion-related diseases in animals and humans, including, but not limited to, scrapie in sheep, BSE in cattle, and kuru disease, GSS and forms of CJD disease in humans. Furthermore, the bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow epidemic in British cattle and, to a lesser degree, in Europe, would make the invention particularly important in Britain and Europe. Through ingestion of prion-contaminated foods and fluids, prions can infect the FDCs or other blood cells of the reticuloendothelial system and thereby gain access to the body and specific body sites, such as the brain. The method of treating prion-associated diseases in subjects in need thereof, comprises administering formulations of pharmaceutical compositions comprising vibriolysin or variants thereof, together with a pharmaceutically effective carrier. As described above, compositions containing proteases produced by *Vibrio* have been described in WO 98/55604 and U.S. Patent Nos. 5,130,250, 5,145,681 and 5,505,943. These, and all other U.S. patents cited herein, are specifically hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety. U.S. Patent No. 5,130,250 discloses the cloning and expression of neutral protease genes from gram-negative microorganisms such as *E.coli* or *Serratia*. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,145,681 and 5,505,943 disclose compositions of a neutral protease, produced by a *Vibrio proteolyticus* strain, or expressed by recombinant host cells transformed or transfected with an expression vector which provides for the expression of said neutral protease. These patents also teach compositions comprising mutants of the extracellular and recombinant neutral protease. As described below, such pharmaceutical compositions of vibriolysin can be newly formulated to enhance access of vibriolysin to infectious prions. Also provided are new formulations of

vibriolysin wherein enzyme activity can be regulated by a change in conditions, such as pH or proteolytic enzyme cleavage.

Another preferred embodiment of the invention provides for a method of treating prion-related diseases during the preclinical stage of the disease, wherein prions incubate within the FDCs before infecting the brain. At the preclinical stage, vibriolysin or variants thereof taken up by the prion-infected cells can cleave prions incubating within FDCs or other cells. Thus, once vibriolysin or variants thereof gain access to the lysosomes of the prion-infected cells, the enzymes degrade the prion proteins and delay or prevent the onset of prion-related diseases, such as CJD. Another preferred embodiment is a method of treating prion-related diseases during the advanced stages of the disease, wherein prions have infected the neurons and brain cells.

COMPOSITIONS AND FORMULATIONS

The present invention provides for a composition or formulation comprising one or more vibriolysin or a variant thereof. The compositions or formulations are suitable for any of the methods taught in this disclosure. Preferably, the amount of vibriolysin or a variant thereof comprise 0.0001% to about 10% by weight of the composition of formulation. The concentration of vibriolysin is preferably at least 0.01 g/ml. More preferably, the concentration of vibriolysin is at least 1 g/ml. Even more preferably, the concentration of vibriolysin is at least 10 g/ml. Even much more preferably, the concentration of vibriolysin is at least 100 g/ml. Generally, the concentration of vibriolysin is from 1-1,000 g/ml.

This composition or formulation comprises vibriolysin or a variant thereof in a state whereby vibriolysin is not found in nature. The vibriolysin can be isolated or purified from a natural source. The vibriolysin can also be obtained or used from a crude extract of a natural or man-made source. Natural sources of vibriolysin can be bacteria that produce vibriolysin. Man-made sources of vibriolysin are *in vivo* or *in vitro* expression systems that produce vibriolysin or a variant thereof. *In vivo* expression systems can be a microorganism, such as bacteria or yeast, or any organism that does not express vibriolysin in nature.

The use of the composition and formulation can result in at least a 10-fold reduction in the number of infective prion particles. Preferably, the reduction is at least a 100-fold reduction. More preferably, the reduction is at least a 1,000-fold reduction. Even more preferably, the reduction is at least a 10,000-fold reduction. Even much more preferably, the reduction is at least a 1,000,000-fold reduction.

The composition or formulation can be for pharmaceutical or non-pharmaceutical purposes. The compositions or formulations can further comprise another non-vibriolysin protease, either able or unable to cleave prion proteins. Examples of non-vibriolysin protease include, but are not limited to, -aminoacylpeptide hydrolase, peptidylamino acid hydrolase, acylamino hydrolase, serine carboxypeptidase, metallo-carboxypeptidase, thiol proteinase, carboxylproteinase and metalloproteinase. Other examples of protease are serine, metallo, thiol and acid protease, and endo and exo-proteases. Further examples are trypsin, chymotrypsin, and subtilisin. When protease, other than vibriolysin or a variant thereof, is present in the composition or formulation, then conditions of use and the components of the composition or formulation are such that the protease is able to cleave prion or non-prion or a fragment of a prion protein.

The compositions or formulations that are not used for pharmaceutical purposes do not necessarily have to be sterile and can contain cellular debris or components from cells that were used to produce vibriolysin or a variant thereof.

The composition or formulation can further comprise one or more detergents, cleaning agents or cleaning adjunct materials that do not reduce the activity or shelf-life of vibriolysin and also provide further cleaning and/or decontamination function. Suitable adjuncts are of a type and concentration that do not reduce the effectiveness of vibriolysin, or a variant thereof, in reducing the activity of infectious prions. Examples of cleaning adjunct materials include, but are not limited to, detergents, surfactants, solvents, buffers, enzymes, soil release agents, clay soil removal agents, dispersing agents, enzyme stabilizers, builders, bleaching agents, dyes, perfumes, and mixtures. Examples of suitable types of detergent are alkyl-dimethylamine oxides, alkyl glucosides, alkyl maltosides, alkyl sulfates (such as sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS)), alkyl thioglucosides, betaines, Big CHAP series, bile acids, CHAP series, digitonin, glucamides, lecithins/lysophosphatidylcholines, nonionic polyoxyethylene-based detergents (such as TRITON, TWEEN, BRIJ, GENAPOL and THESIT), quaternary ammonium compounds, and the like. Suitable detergents can be determined using routine experimentation (see Neugebauer, J., *A Guide to the Properties and Use of Detergents in Biology and Biochemistry*, Calbiochem-Novabiochem Corp., La Jolla, California, 1988). Detergents can help enhance the effectiveness of vibriolysin by increasing solubilization. The form of the composition or formulation can be a liquid, granule, powder, bar, paste, spray, tablet, gel, form, or the like.

The composition or formulation can further comprise one or more compounds, agents, chemical, molecules, or buffers, alone or in combination, to enhance the self-life of the

composition or formulation. Under alkaline conditions, the biological activity of vibriolysin or a variant thereof can be maintained for long periods. Preferably, the time period is at least 6 months. More preferably, the time period is at least one year. Even more preferably, the time period is at least two years. Even further more preferably, the time period is at least three years.

5 Even further more preferably, the time period is at least five years. Further, the efficacy, or the enzymatic or biological activity, of the vibriolysin or a variant thereof is able to persist for long time periods after application, contact or administration. This means that a sufficient ability to reduce or destroy the infectivity of prions persists. The efficacy is able to persist for at least one day after application, contact or administration. Preferably, it is able to persist for at least two
10 days. More preferably, it is able to persist for at least three days. Even more preferably, it is able to persist for at least one week. This persistence of vibriolysin or a variant thereof in shelf-life and application is due to its property of not autolysing. By way of contrast, Proteinase K is expensive and unstable and is not as suitable, even if it were 10-fold more potent. The vibriolysin or variants thereof of the present invention can be used over and over by the user.

15 Regarding the alkalinity of the composition or formulation, the pH of the composition or formulation can be from 7, or more than 7 to 8, 8-10, 10-12, or 12-14. Preferably it has a pH greater than 7. More preferably, the pH is from pH 8 to 14. Even more preferably, the pH is from pH 8 to 12.

The composition or formulation can be used for any object that requires the reduction of
20 the infectivity or destruction of prions present. These objects include actual or potentially prion-contaminated facilities and instruments. These facilities and instruments especially include facilities and instruments that (1) have a likelihood of contamination by prions, and/or (2) have a need not to be contaminated by prions in order to avoid or reduce infection of humans or livestock. The object can be a room, facility, instrument, foodstuff, animal feed, or
25 the like. The object can be any hardsurface or comprise one or more hardsurfaces. Preferably, these objects are those that have a high likelihood to come in contact with animals, such as livestock, such as cattle, and humans. More preferably, these objects are those may be ingested, absorbed or come into contact with the mucous surfaces of animals and/or humans. Examples of rooms and facilities are any that may be entered by an animal or human, especially any used
30 for medical or surgical purposes, or any involved with the slaughtering of animals or livestock, or used for handling foodstuff or animal feed. Examples of instruments are dental instruments, medical and surgical instruments, utensils, cutlery, abattoir/slaughterhouse/butcher equipment, and the like. The composition or formulations are also used for decontaminating and/or

disinfecting and/or cleaning instruments and facilities involved in research where prions are utilized, or have a high likelihood of coming in contact with prion proteins.

For treatment at the preclinical stage, pharmaceutical compositions of vibriolysin are formulated to enhance the enzyme's capability to follow the prion infectious path. As described
5 above, infectious prion particles may enter the body by ingestion of prion-contaminated food products. Prions ingested orally are taken up into the FDCs of the germinal centers within the reticuloendothelial system. Prions may bind to complement factors and the resulting prion-complement factor complex would then be captured by FDCs through complement receptors such as CR1/2. These cells normally function to capture native antigen and form immune
10 complexes for presentation to B cells. Thus, the complement system may play an important role in opsonizing prion particles and enhancing complement receptor-mediated uptake into the FDCs. Prions in the FDCs may then incubate preclinically, increasing in titer and concentration before being transported to the brain by FDCs or some type of white blood cell. Thus, when prions enter the body via a peripheral route, they replicate in the lymphoreticular tissues before
15 moving through the nerves into the spinal cord or brain stem, and then to the brain.

The present invention provides a formulation of a pharmaceutical composition comprising vibriolysin or a variant thereof, wherein the enzyme is formulated into a structure resembling the infectious prion particle (Figure 1). Such a structure can have a crystallized, particulate, lipid conjugated, or liposomal form, which enhances the enzyme's capability to
20 track the prions' infectious path and to access target sites which accumulate prions within the body. For example, vibriolysin or a variant thereof is processed into a microcrystalline or equivalent form and stabilized with crosslinking to temporarily maintain insolubility of the enzyme and enzyme inactivation at normal pH (7.0-7.4). The microcrystalline structure is then lipidated, wherein fatty acids are attached to the surface of the crystal, to create an "organism"-
25 like structure. The lipid coat would enhance uptake with fats by the lacteals in the intestines and entry of the particles into the circulation by way of the thoracic duct, the lymph system that normally moves fat from the bowel to the bloodstream. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,618,710; 5,849,296; 5,976,529; and 6,011,001 disclose protein crystals crosslinked with a multifunctional crosslinking agent and having resistance to exogenous proteolysis. Such proteins may be
30 enzymes or antibodies. U.S. Patent No. 5,849,296 also discloses a lipase crystal crosslinked with a multifunctional crosslinking agent and having resistance to exogenous proteolysis. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,976,529 and 6,011,001 describe methods for carrying out protein and enzyme therapy by administering orally a crosslinked enzyme crystal. U.S. Patent No. 6,042,824

describes methods for producing crosslinked protein crystal formulations and methods for using them to optimize chemical reactions in organic solvents, including those used in industrial scale chemical processes. Such methods are useful in formulating vibriolysin and variants thereof into prion-like structures.

5 A further embodiment is a formulation wherein the prion-like structure is modified by coating particle with a lipid surface to enhance complement activation as is observed in liposomes. As described above, the opsonization of the particles by the complement proteins results in their uptake into the FDC's of the germinal centers. After uptake into the lysosomes of the FDCs, the lipid coat is degraded by the acid lipases and the vibriolysin enzyme dissolved
10 within the lysosomal milieu.

For treatment at the advanced stage, pharmaceutical compositions of vibriolysin are formulated to enhance the enzyme's capability of uptake into the neurons and across the blood brain barrier. As described above, the vibriolysin proteins and variants thereof are formulated into a structure resembling a prion, enabling the enzyme to track the path of the prion from the
15 lymphoreticular tissues moving through the nerves into the spinal cord or brain stem, and then to the brain. Entry into the brain across the blood brain barrier is normally restricted to small hydrophobic molecules, specifically transported nutrients such as glucose and certain amino acids, and specifically transcytosed macromolecules such as transferrin (Staddon and Rubin, *Curr. Opin. Neurobiol.* 6: 622-627 (1996)). The present invention provides a formulation, in
20 which the vibriolysin structure is further engineered to access passive carrier and active transport systems across the blood-brain barrier and across neuronal cell membranes. The blood brain barrier permeability to vibriolysin may be enhanced by: (1) modification of the vibriolysin structure to increase its lipid solubility; (2) linkage of the vibriolysin molecule to a peptide from a transporter system using liposome linkers or nanoparticle technology (C & EN,
25 September 18, 2000, page 58); and (3) administration with agents shown to increase blood brain barrier permeability, including bradykinin B₂ receptor agonists, serotonin, and H₂ receptor agonists (U.S. Patent Nos. 5,112,596 and 5,268,164; Emerich, *et al.*, *Br. J. Cancer* 80:964-70; Mackie, *et al.*, *Pharm. Res.* 16:1360-1365 (1999); Wahl, *et al.*, *Immunopharmacology* 33:257-263 (1996); Morel, *et al.*, *Inflammation* 14(5):571-583 (1990); Abbott, *Cell. Mol. Neurobiology*
30 20:131-147 (2000); Mashito, *et al.*, *Immunopharmacology* 43:249-253 (1999)).

ROUTES OF ADMINISTRATION

For use as a therapeutic, the activity of the vibriolysin protease is restricted to the lysosome in order to prevent the degradation of blood clotting components while in the

circulation. Hence, another embodiment of the present invention is a formulation of vibriolysin capable of uptake into lysosomes. The uptake of vibriolysin into lysosomes may be enhanced by: (1) complement-activating surface characteristics; (2) tagging the vibriolysin protein with a lysosomal enzyme, such as alpha-L-iduronidase, which is normally taken up by mannose-6-phosphate receptors and targeted to lysosomes; and (3) attachment of mannose-6-phosphate residues of sufficient quantity or addition of mannose sugars or proteins with mannose in linkage to target macrophages of the reticuloendothelial system, in order to increase the enzyme binding affinity and uptake by mannose-6-phosphate receptors.

A further embodiment of the present invention is a formulation of vibriolysin wherein its enzyme activity can be regulated by changes in conditions such as pH or by lysosomal enzymes. U.S. Patent No. 6,140,475 discloses a method for controlled dissolution of crosslinked protein crystals. The method comprises producing crosslinked protein crystals with a multifunctional crosslinking agent, wherein the resulting protein crystals are characterized by the ability to change from an insoluble and stable form to a soluble and active form upon a change in the environment, including changes in temperature, pH, chemical composition, concentration, and shear force. The multifunctional crosslinking agent is glutaraldehyde at a concentration of between 0.076% and about 0.05% (vol/vol). International Patent Application No. WO 9955310 discloses formulations and compositions of protein or nucleic acid crystals, methods of crystallization of proteins and nucleic acids, methods of stabilization of protein and nucleic acid crystals, and methods of encapsulating proteins, glycoproteins, enzymes, antibodies, hormones, and peptide crystals or crystal formulations into compositions for biological delivery to humans and animals. Thus, the vibriolysin enzyme is administered in a microcrystalline, lipidated prion-like form that is inactive, but can become activated only upon exposure to specific conditions, such as a change in pH, temperature or lysosomal enzyme composition or concentration within the lysosome. The activity or half-life of vibriolysin can also be restricted by engineering the enzyme to impart a sensitivity to degradation by other lysosomal proteases or denaturation under specific conditions, such as an acidic environment, within a reasonable time period, and thereby prevent excess vibriolysin activity and any potential destruction of the lysosome and cell death.

Therapeutic enzymes may be administered in a number of ways such as parenteral, topical, intranasal, inhalation or oral administration. In some embodiments, the invention provides for administering the enzyme in a pharmaceutical composition together with a pharmaceutically-acceptable carrier, which may be solid, semi-solid or liquid or an ingestible

capsule. Examples of pharmaceutical compositions useful in the present invention include tablets and drops, such as nasal drops. Compositions for topical application include, but are not limited to, ointments, jellies, creams and suspensions, aerosols for inhalation, nasal spray, and liposomes.

5 To produce pharmaceutical compositions for oral application containing the therapeutic enzyme(s), the enzyme(s) may be mixed with a solid, pulverulent carrier. The carrier may include, but is not limited to, lactose, saccharose, sorbitol, mannitol, starch (for example, a potato starch or a corn starch), amylopectin, laminaria powder, citrus pulp powder, cellulose derivative, and gelatine. The pharmaceutical compositions may also include lubricants such as
10 magnesium or calcium stearate or a Carbowax or other polyethylene glycol waxes, and they may be compressed to form tablets or cores for dragees. If drages are required, the cores may be coated with, for example, a concentrated sugar solution. The sugar solutions may contain gum arabic, talc and/or titanium dioxide, or alternatively, a film-forming agent dissolved in easily volatile organic solvents or mixtures of organic solvents. Dyestuffs may be added to such
15 coatings, for example, to distinguish between different contents of active substance. For a composition of soft gelatine capsules consisting of gelatine, or glycerol as a plasticizer, or similar closed capsules, the active substance may be admixed with a Carbowax® or a suitable oil such as sesame oil, olive oil or arachis oil. Hard gelatine capsules may contain granulates of the active substance with solid, pulverulent carriers such as lactose, saccharose, sorbitol,
20 mannitol, starches (for example, potato starch, corn starch or amylopectin), and cellulose derivatives or gelatine, and they may also include magnesium stearate or stearic acid as lubricants.

 Therapeutic enzymes of the present invention may also be administered parenterally such as by subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous injection or by sustained release
25 subcutaneous implant. In subcutaneous, intramuscular and intravenous injection, a therapeutic enzyme or other active ingredient may be dissolved or dispersed in a liquid carrier vehicle. For parenteral administration, the active material may be suitably admixed with an acceptable vehicle, preferably of the vegetable oil variety, such as peanut oil, cottonseed oil and the like. Other parenteral vehicles such as organic compositions using solketal, glycerol, formal, and
30 aqueous partnered formulations may also be used. For parenteral application by injection, compositions may comprise an aqueous solution of a water-soluble pharmaceutically-acceptable salt of the active acids according to the invention, desirably in a concentration of 0.5-10%, and optionally also a stabilizing agent and/or buffer substances in aqueous solution. Dosage units of

the solution may advantageously be enclosed in ampoules. When therapeutic enzymes are administered in the form of a subcutaneous implant, the compound may be suspended or dissolved in a slowly dispersed material known to those skilled in the art or administered in a device which slowly releases the active material through the use of a constant driving force, such as an osmotic pump. In such cases, administration over an extended period of time may be possible.

For topical application, the pharmaceutical compositions are suitable in the form of an ointment, gel, suspension, cream, or the like. The amount of active substance may vary, for example, between 0.05-20% by weight of the active substance. Such pharmaceutical compositions for topical application may be prepared in known manners by mixing the active substance with known carrier materials, including but not limited to, isopropanol, glycerol, paraffin, stearyl alcohol, or polyethylene glycol. The pharmaceutically-acceptable carrier may also include a known chemical absorption promoter. Examples of absorption promoters are dimethylacetamide (U.S. Patent No. 3,472,931), trichloro ethanol or trifluoroethanol (U.S. Patent No. 3,891,757), and certain alcohols and mixtures thereof (British Patent No. 1,001,949). A carrier material for topical application to unbroken skin is also described in the British Patent Specification No. 1,464,975, which discloses a carrier material consisting of a solvent comprising 40-70% (v/v) isopropanol and 0-60% (v/v) glycerol, the balance, if any, being an inert constituent of a diluent not exceeding 40% of the total volume of solvent.

The dosage at which pharmaceutical compositions containing enzymes are administered may vary within a wide range and depend on various factors, such as the severity of the infection and the age of the patient. The dosage may have to be individually adjusted. The pharmaceutical compositions containing a therapeutic enzyme may suitably be formulated so that they provide doses within these ranges either as single dosage units or as multiple dosage units. In addition to containing a therapeutic enzyme, the pharmaceutical compositions may contain one or more substrates or cofactors for the reaction catalyzed by the therapeutic enzyme in the compositions.

The present invention provides a DNA sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant that can be used in a transgenic animal or as gene therapy to treat prion-associated diseases. The therapeutic enzymes, according to the present invention, may be administered by means of transforming patient cells with nucleic acids encoding a therapeutic enzyme when the therapeutic enzyme is a protein or ribonucleic acid sequence. A nucleic acid sequence encoding a therapeutic enzyme may be incorporated into a vector for transformation into cells of a subject

to be treated. A vector may be designed to integrate into the chromosomes of the subject, for example, retroviral vectors, or to replicate autonomously in the host cells. Vectors containing nucleotide sequences encoding a therapeutic enzyme may be designed to provide for continuous or regulated expression of the enzyme. Additionally, the genetic vector encoding the

5 therapeutic enzymes may be designed to stably integrate into the cell genome or to only be present transiently. The general methodology of conventional genetic therapy may be applied to polynucleotide sequences encoding therapeutic enzymes. Reviews of conventional genetic therapy techniques can be found in Friedman, *Science* 244:1275-1281 (1989); Ledley, *J Inherit. Metab. Dis.* 13:587-616 (1990); and Tososhev, *et al.*, *Curr Opinions Biotech.* 1:55-61 (1990).

10 A preferred embodiment is a recombinant vibriolysin protein or variant thereof, which can specifically target and gain access to cells such as FDCs known to accumulate prions. Another preferred embodiment is a recombinant vibriolysin protein or variant thereof, wherein its enzymatic activity, such as the transformation between active and inactive forms, is regulated by specific conditions, such as exposure to infectious prion particles, a specific pH range, or

15 proteolytic enzymes. Yet another preferred embodiment is a recombinant vibriolysin protein or variant thereof that exists in an inactive "pro-form", which becomes activated by enzymatic cleavage, such as by lysosomal enzymes.

EXAMPLE

20 Prions or infection proteins derived animal forms of prion disease (scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy BSE) in cows) as well as the human form of the disease (variant Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease (vCJD)) have the special property of being resistant to protease digestion. This property is believed in part to be an important characteristic in their propagation and the difficulty in eliminating prions from the body. Prions are composed of very

25 hydrophobic prion proteins that form large aggregates. Vibriolysin, a protease with the propensity to cleave hydrophobic regions of proteins, is a likely candidate for a protease that can cleave the prion protein. The following experiment was undertaken to assess the ability of vibriolysin to cleave prion proteins.

Methods and Materials

30 A sample of vCJD affected brain was obtained and a 20% homogenate prepared in phosphate buffered saline. The homogenate was dilute to a 10% w/v solution with Tris-HCL and NaCl solutions to give a final homogenate of 10% vCJD brain, 100 mM Tris-HCl, and 150 mM NaCl, pH 8.0. Increasing concentrations of vibriolysin were added to aliquots of the 10%

brain homogenate and the mix incubate at either 20°C (Figure 3A) or 40°C (Figure 3B). After 1 hour, the reactions were stopped by addition of SDS-PAGE loading buffer containing 8 mM AEBSF. The samples were boiled at 100°C for 10 mins and the tubes spun to collect the condensate. The samples were run on standard SDS-PAGE gels, the proteins transferred to
5 PVDF using a standard Western blot method. The Prion protein was visualized using a mouse monoclonal antibody IgG2 (ICSM35). The primary antibody was developed using a goat anti-mouse secondary antibody conjugated to horse radish peroxidase and chemiluminescent detection performed.

Results

10 Digestion of the prion in human vCJD brain shows that Vibriolysin can cleave the prion protein over the one hour period, particularly at the highest concentration of 1 mg/ml. Given that the conditions tested are not the optimal ones for Vibriolysin, it would be expected that even higher potency would be possible at higher pH's and temperature. The data show that Vibriolysin has a prion-digesting activity that may be useful in the disinfection of surgical
15 instruments or for other purposes. In addition, the unique stability, pH properties and lack of autodigestion, make Vibriolysin an optimal enzyme for the commercial application of proteases to disinfection and decontamination of prions.

The invention, and the manner and process of making and using it, are now described in
20 such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, to make and use the same. It is to be understood that the foregoing describes preferred embodiments of the present invention and that modifications may be made therein without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention as set forth in the claims. To particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter regarded as invention, the
25 following claims conclude this specification.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A composition capable of reducing the infectivity of prion, comprising vibriolysin or a variant thereof in an amount effective to reduce the infectivity of prion, and one or more cleaning adjunct materials.
- 5 2. The composition according to Claim 1, wherein said pH is higher than pH 7.
3. The composition according to Claim 2, wherein said pH is from pH 8 to 12.
4. The composition according to Claim 1, wherein, after one year of the manufacture of said composition, said composition is capable of retaining its capacity of reducing the infectivity of prion.
- 10 5. The composition according to Claim 4, wherein, after five years of the manufacture of said composition, said composition is capable of retaining its capacity of reducing the infectivity of prion.
6. The composition of Claim 1, which additionally contains a detergent.
7. A method of reducing the activity of infectious prions, comprising: contacting a
15 vibriolysin protease or variant thereof with said prions in an amount effective to cleave or degrade said prions or destroy their infective activity.
8. The method according to Claim 7, wherein said infectious prions are destroyed.
9. A method of sanitizing facilities or instruments contaminated with prions
comprising: contacting said prions with a solution comprising a vibriolysin protease or variant
20 thereof in an amount effective to reduce or eradicate prion contamination of said instruments and facilities.
10. The method of Claim 9, wherein the solution contains a detergent.
11. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a DNA sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant thereof, wherein said vibriolysin or a variant thereof has the ability to gain access to
25 target sites that accumulate prions within the body, and a pharmaceutical carrier.
12. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a DNA sequence encoding vibriolysin or a variant thereof, wherein said vibriolysin or a variant thereof has the ability to transform from an inactive state to an activated state capable of cleaving prions and a pharmaceutical carrier.
- 30 13. A formulation of the pharmaceutical composition comprising vibriolysin or a variant thereof, wherein said formulation is a prion-like structure, capable of tracking the infectious path of the prion from the lymphoreticular tissues to the nerves, spinal cord, brain stem, or brain.

14. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein said prion-like structure comprises vibriolysin crystals crosslinked with a multifunctional crosslinking agent and having resistance to exogenous proteolysis and a coat of lipid chains.

15. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein the prion-like structure is modified to increase access of said structure to one or more target sites that accumulate prions within the body.

16. The formulation according to Claim 15, wherein said one or more target sites comprises follicular dendritic cells.

17. The formulation according to Claim 15, wherein said one or more target sites comprises lysosomes.

18. The formulation according to Claim 15, wherein said one or more target sites comprises the central nervous system.

19. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein said prion-like structure is modified to activate factors of the complement system and enhance uptake of said structure into cells of the reticuloendothelial system.

20. The formulation according to Claim 19, wherein said cells are follicular dendritic cells.

21. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein said prion-like structure is modified by attachment of a moiety to enhance uptake by mannose receptors and transfer to the lysosomes.

22. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein said prion-like structure is modified to increase passage of said structure across the blood brain barrier into the central nervous system.

23. The formulation according to Claim 13, wherein said prion-like structure comprises vibriolysin or a variant thereof capable of transforming from an inactive state to an activated state, wherein said vibriolysin or variant thereof is capable of cleaving prions upon a change in environment.

24. The formulation according to Claim 23, wherein said change in environment is a change in pH, temperature, concentration, or chemical composition.

25. A method of treating or preventing a prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases in a subject or biological tissue in need thereof comprising: administering to said subject a formulation of a pharmaceutical composition comprising a vibriolysin protease or

variant thereof with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier in an amount effective to treat or prevent said prion-caused, prion-related or prion-like diseases.

26. The method according to Claim 25, wherein said prion-related disease is selected from the group consisting of scrapie, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, kuru disease,

5 Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker Syndrome, and Creutzfeld-Jacob disease.

27. The method according to Claim 25, wherein said prion-like disease is selected from the group consisting of Alzheimer's disease, cerebral amyloid angiopathy, Parkinson's disease, frontal temporal dementia, and Pick's disease, amyotrophic and lateral sclerosis, and Huntington's disease.

10 28. The method according to Claim 25, wherein said formulation is a prion-like structure capable of tracking the infectious path of the prion from the lymphoreticular tissues to the nerves, spinal cord, brain stem, or brain.

29. The method according to Claim 28, wherein said prion-like structure comprises vibriolysin crystals crosslinked with a multifunctional crosslinking agent and having resistance
15 to exogenous proteolysis and a coat of lipid chains.

30. The method according to Claim 28, wherein the prion-like structure is modified to increase access of said structure to one or more target sites that accumulate prions within the body.

31. The method according to Claim 30, wherein said one or more target sites
20 comprises follicular dendritic cells.

32. The method according to Claim 30, wherein said one or more target sites comprises lysosomes.

33. The method according to Claim 30, wherein said one or more target sites comprises the central nervous system.

25 34. The method according to Claim 28, wherein said prion-like structure is modified to activate factors of the complement system and enhance uptake of said structure into cells of the reticuloendothelial system.

35. The method according to Claim 31, wherein said cells are follicular dendritic cells.

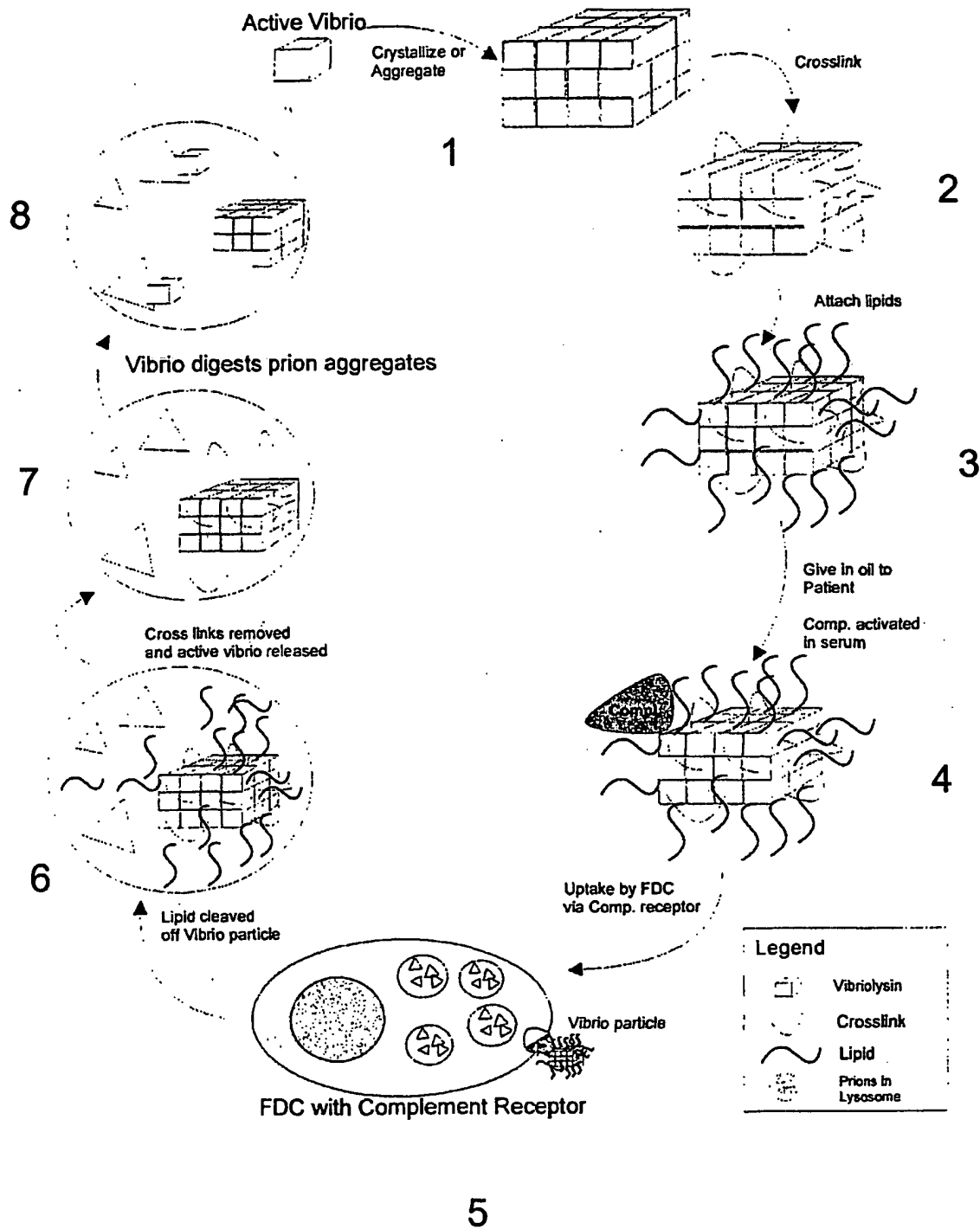
30 36. The method according to Claim 28, wherein said prion-like structure is modified by attachment of a moiety to enhance uptake by mannose receptors and transfer to the lysosomes.

37. The method according to Claim 28, wherein said prion-like structure is modified to increase passage of said structure across the blood brain barrier into the central nervous system.

5 38. The method according to Claim 28, wherein said prion-like structure comprises vibriolysin or a variant thereof capable of transforming from an inactive state to an activated state, wherein said vibriolysin or variant thereof is capable of cleaving prions upon a change in environment.

39. The method according to Claim 38, wherein said change in environment is a change in pH, temperature, concentration, or chemical composition.

FIGURE 1



TTTAATTCT	GATTTATCAG	TAGTTAAACA	ACGATTGAAA	ATAATCTCCA	GGATTGAGAA	60
ATG AAT AAA ACA CAA CGT CAC ATC AAC TGG CTG CTG GCT GTT AGC GCG Met Asn Lys Thr Gln Arg His Ile Asn Trp Leu Leu Ala Val Ser Ala 1 5 10 15						108
GCA ACT GCG CTA CCT GTC ACC GCT GCA GAA ATG ATC AAC GTA AAT GAT Ala Thr Ala Leu Pro Val Thr Ala Ala Glu Met Ile Asn Val Asn Asp 20 25 30						156
GGC AGC CTG CTA AAC CAG GCT CTT AAA GCT CAG TCA CAG AGC GTT GCC Gly Ser Leu Leu Asn Gln Ala Leu Lys Ala Gln Ser Gln Ser Val Ala 35 40 45						204
CCG GTG GAA ACC GGA TTC AAA CAA ATG AAA CGA GTT GTT TTG CCA AAT Pro Val Glu Thr Gly Phe Lys Gln Met Lys Arg Val Val Leu Pro Asn 50 55 60						252
GGC AAA GTG AAA GTT CGT TAT CAA CAA ACT CAC CAC GGT CTA CCG GTT Gly Lys Val Lys Val Arg Tyr Gln Gln Thr His His Gly Leu Pro Val 65 70 75 80						300
TTC AAC ACC TCG GTA GTG GCG ACT GAA TCG AAG TCT GGT AGT AGC GAA Phe Asn Thr Ser Val Val Ala Thr Glu Ser Lys Ser Gly Ser Ser Glu 85 90 95						348
GTG TTC GGT GTG ATG GCT CAG GGT ATC GCA GAC GAC GTG TCT ACA CTG Val Phe Gly Val Met Ala Gln Gly Ile Ala Asp Asp Val Ser Thr Leu 100 105 110						396
ACG CCA TCC GTT GAG ATG AAG CAG GCC ATT TCA ATT GCT AAA TCG CGT Thr Pro Ser Val Glu Met Lys Gln Ala Ile Ser Ile Ala Lys Ser Arg 115 120 125						444
TTC CAA CAG CAA GAA AAA ATG GTT GCG GAA CCT GCA ACG GAA AAC GAA Phe Gln Gln Glu Lys Met Val Ala Glu Pro Ala Thr Glu Asn Glu 130 135 140						492
AAA GCC GAG TTG ATG GTT CGT CTG GAC GAC AAC AAT CAA GCG CAA CTA Lys Ala Glu Leu Met Val Arg Leu Asp Asp Asn Asn Gln Ala Gln Leu 145 150 155 160						540
GTG TAT CTG GTT GAT TTC TTC GTT GCC GAG GAT CAC CCA GCG CGT CCT Val Tyr Leu Val Asp Phe Phe Val Ala Glu Asp His Pro Ala Arg Pro 165 170 175						588
TTC TTT TTC ATT GAT GCG CAA ACG GGT GAA GTA CTG CAA ACT TGG GAT Phe Phe Phe Ile Asp Ala Gln Thr Gly Glu Val Leu Gln Thr Trp Asp 180 185 190						636
GGT CTG AAC CAT GCA CAA GCT GAC GGT ACT GGC CCT GGC GGT AAC ACC Gly Leu Asn His Ala Gln Ala Asp Gly Thr Gly Pro Gly Gly Asn Thr 195 200 205						684
AAA ACA GGT CGT TAT GAA TAC GGT TCT GAC TTT CCT CCG TTT GTC ATC Lys Thr Gly Arg Tyr Glu Tyr Gly Ser Asp Phe Pro Pro Phe Val Ile 210 215 220						732
GAT AAA GTC GGC ACT AAG TGT TCA ATG AAC AAC AGC GCG GTA AGA ACG Asp Lys Val Gly Thr Lys Cys Ser Met Asn Asn Ser Ala Val Arg Thr 225 230 235 240						780
GTT GAC CTG AAC GGC TCA ACT TCA GGT AAC ACC ACT TAC AGC TAT ACC Val Asp Leu Asn Gly Ser Thr Ser Gly Asn Thr Thr Tyr Ser Tyr Thr 245 250 255						828

FIG. 2A

TGT Cys	AAC Asn	GAC Asp	TCA Ser 260	ACC Thr	AAC Asn	TAC Tyr	AAC Asn	GAT Asp 265	TAC Tyr	AAA Lys	GCC Ala	ATT Ile	AAC Asn 270	GGC Gly	GCG Ala	876
TAC Tyr	TCG Ser	CCA Pro 275	CTG Leu	AAC Asn	GAT Asp	GCC Ala	CAC His 280	TAC Tyr	TTC Phe	GGT Gly	AAA Lys	GTG Val 285	GTT Val	TTC Phe	GAT Asp	924
ATG Met	TAC Tyr 290	AAA Lys	GAC Asp	TGG Trp	ATG Met	AAC Asn 295	ACC Thr	ACA Thr	CCA Pro	CTG Leu	ACG Thr 300	TTC Phe	CAG Gln	CTG Leu	ACT Thr	972
ATG Met 305	CGT Arg	GTT Val	CAC His	TAT Tyr	GGT Gly 310	AAC Asn	AAC Asn	TAC Tyr	GAA Glu	AAC Asn 315	GCG Ala	TTC Phe	TGG Trp	AAT Asn	GGT Gly 320	1020
TCA Ser	TCC Ser	ATG Met	ACC Thr	TTC Phe 325	GGT Gly	GAT Asp	GGC Gly	TAC Tyr	AGC Ser 330	ACC Thr	TTC Phe	TAC Tyr	CCG Pro	CTG Leu 335	GTG Val	1068
GAT Asp	ATT Ile	AAC Asn	GTT Val 340	AGT Ser	GCC Ala	CAC His	GAA Glu	GTG Val 345	AGC Ser	CAC His	GGT Gly	TTC Phe	ACC Thr 350	GAA Glu	CAA Gln	1116
AAC Asn	TCG Ser	GGT Gly 355	CTG Leu	GTG Val	TAC Tyr	GAG Glu	AAT Asn 360	ATG Met	TCT Ser	GGT Gly	GGT Gly	ATG Met 365	AAC Asn	GAA Glu	GCG Ala	1164
TTC Phe	TCT Ser 370	GAT Asp	ATT Ile	GCA Ala	GGT Gly	GAA Glu 375	GCA Ala	GCA Ala	GAG Glu	TTC Phe	TAC Tyr 380	ATG Met	AAA Lys	GGC Gly	AGC Ser	1212
GTT Val 385	GAC Asp	TGG Trp	GTT Val	GTC Val	GGT Gly 390	GCG Ala	GAT Asp	ATC Ile	TTC Phe	AAA Lys 395	TCA Ser	TCC Ser	GGC Gly	GGT Gly	CTG Leu 400	1260
CGT Arg	TAC Tyr	TTT Phe	GAT Asp	CAG Gln 405	CCT Pro	TCG Ser	CGT Arg	GAC Asp	GGC Gly 410	CGT Arg	TCT Ser	ATC Ile	GAC Asp	CAT His 415	GCG Ala	1308
TCT Ser	GAC Asp	TAC Tyr	TAC Tyr 420	AAT Asn	GGC Gly	CTG Leu	AAT Asn	GTT Val 425	CAC His	TAC Tyr	TCA Ser	AGT Ser	GGT Gly 430	GTA Val	TTC Phe	1356
AAC Asn	CGT Arg	GCG Ala 435	TTC Phe	TAC Tyr	CTG Leu	CTG Leu	GCT Ala 440	AAC Asn	AAA Lys	GCG Ala	GGT Gly	TGG Trp 445	GAT Asp	GTA Val	GCG Arg	1404
AAA Lys 450	GGC Gly	TTT Phe	GAA Glu	GTG Val	TTT Phe	ACC Thr 455	CTG Leu	GCT Ala	AAC Asn	CAA Gln	TTG Leu 460	TAC Tyr	TGG Trp	ACA Thr	GCG Ala	1452
AAC Asn 465	AGC Ser	ACA Thr	TTT Phe	GAT Asp	GAA Glu 470	GGC Gly	GGT Gly	TGT Cys	GGT Gly	GTA Val 475	GTG Val	AAA Lys	GCT Ala	GCG Ala	AGC Ser 480	1500
GAC Asp	ATG Met	GGT Gly	TAC Tyr	AGC Ser 485	GTT Val	GCA Ala	GAC Asp	GTA Val	GAA Glu 490	GAT Asp	GCG Ala	TTT Phe	AAC Asn	ACG Thr 495	GTA Val	1548
GGC Gly	GTT Val	AAC Asn	GCG Ala 500	TCT Ser	TGT Cys	GGT Gly	GCA Ala	ACT Thr 505	CCT Pro	CCT Pro	CCG Pro	TCT Ser	GGC Gly 510	GAT Asp	GTA Val	1596

FIG. 2B

CTG	GAA	ATC	GGT	AAA	CCG	CTG	GCG	AAC	CTT	TCA	GGT	AAC	CGC	AAT	GAC	1644
Leu	Glu	Ile	Gly	Lys	Pro	Leu	Ala	Asn	Leu	Ser	Gly	Asn	Arg	Asn	Asp	
		515					520					525				
ATG	ACT	TAC	TAC	ACG	TTC	ACA	CCA	AGC	AGC	TCA	TCT	AGC	GTA	GTG	ATT	1692
Met	Thr	Tyr	Tyr	Thr	Phe	Thr	Pro	Ser	Ser	Ser	Ser	Ser	Val	Val	Ile	
	530					535					540					
AAG	ATC	ACT	GGC	GGT	ACA	GGT	GAT	GCA	GAC	CTT	TAC	GTG	AAA	GCG	GGT	1740
Lys	Ile	Thr	Gly	Gly	Thr	Gly	Asp	Ala	Asp	Leu	Tyr	Val	Lys	Ala	Gly	
	545				550					555					560	
AGC	AAG	CCA	ACC	ACG	ACT	TCT	TAC	GAT	TGC	CGT	CCA	TAT	AAG	TAT	GGT	1788
Ser	Lys	Pro	Thr	Thr	Thr	Ser	Tyr	Asp	Cys	Arg	Pro	Tyr	Lys	Tyr	Gly	
				565					570					575		
AAC	GAA	GAG	CAG	TGT	TCA	ATT	TCA	GCG	CAA	GCG	GGT	ACT	ACG	TAT	CAC	1836
Asn	Glu	Glu	Gln	Cys	Ser	Ile	Ser	Ala	Gln	Ala	Gly	Thr	Thr	Tyr	His	
			580					585					590			
GTT	ATG	CTG	CGT	GGT	TAC	AGC	AAT	TAC	GCT	GGT	GTA	ACT	TTG	CGT	GCT	1884
Val	Met	Leu	Arg	Gly	Tyr	Ser	Asn	Tyr	Ala	Gly	Val	Thr	Leu	Arg	Ala	
		595					600					605				
GAC	TAA	ACTCAGAATG	GAACCAGTGA	AGGCGCACCT	TAAGGTCGCC	TTTTTTGTAT	1940									
Asp	Ter															
	609															
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FIG. 2C

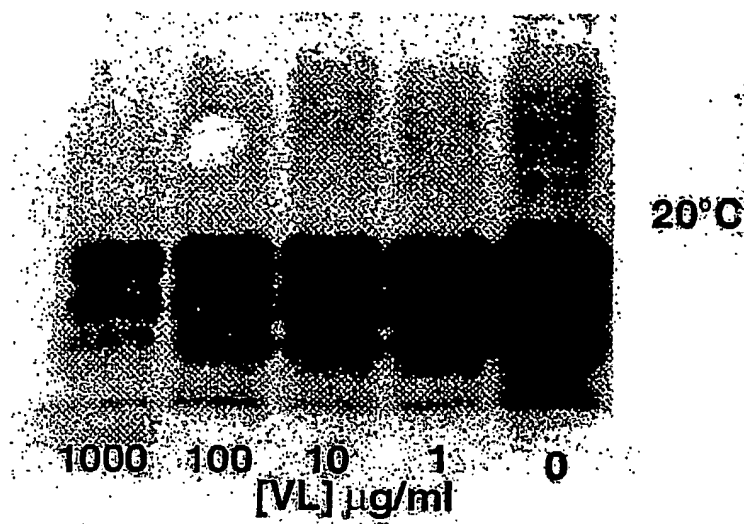


Figure 3A

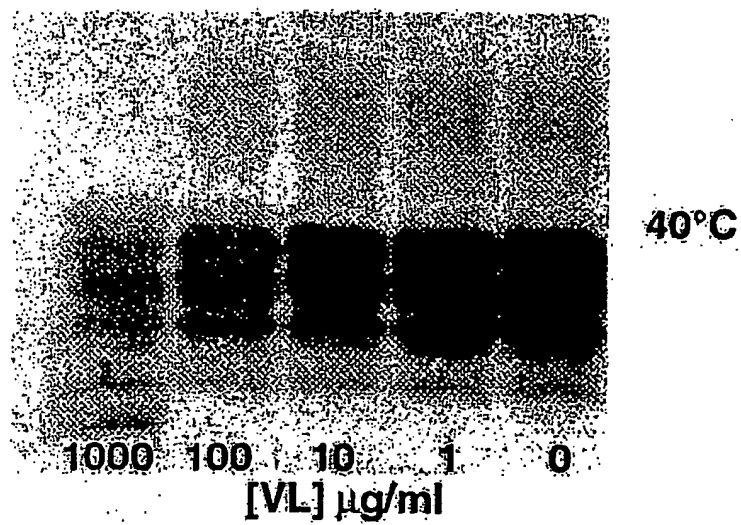


Figure 3B

SEQUENCE LISTING

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Ala Thr Ala Leu Pro Val Thr Ala Ala Glu Met Ile Asn Val Asn Asp	
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Gly Ser Leu Leu Asn Gln Ala Leu Lys Ala Gln Ser Gln Ser Val Ala	
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Gly Lys Val Lys Val Arg Tyr Gln Gln Thr His His Gly Leu Pro Val	
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Phe Asn Thr Ser Val Val Ala Thr Glu Ser Lys Ser Gly Ser Ser Glu	
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Val Leu Gly Val Met Ala Gln Gly Ile Ala Asp Asp Val Ser Thr Leu	
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Thr	Pro	Ser	Val	Glu	Met	Lys	Gln	Ala	Ile	Ser	Ile	Ala	Lys	Ser	Arg		
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Phe	Gln	Gln	Gln	Glu	Lys	Met	Val	Ala	Glu	Pro	Ala	Thr	Glu	Asn	Glu		
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Val	Tyr	Leu	Val	Asp	Phe	Phe	Val	Ala	Glu	Asp	His	Pro	Ala	Arg	Pro		
				165					170					175			
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Phe	Phe	Phe	Ile	Asp	Ala	Gln	Thr	Gly	Glu	Val	Leu	Gln	Thr	Trp	Asp		
			180					185					190				
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Asp	Lys	Val	Gly	Thr	Lys	Cys	Ser	Met	Asn	Asn	Thr	Ala	Val	Arg	Thr		
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Val	Asp	Leu	Asn	Gly	Ser	Thr	Ser	Gly	Asn	Thr	Thr	Tyr	Ser	Tyr	Thr		
				245					250					255			
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Cys	Asn	Asp	Ser	Thr	Asn	Tyr	Asn	Asp	Tyr	Lys	Ala	Ile	Asn	Gly	Ala		
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Met	Tyr	Lys	Asp	Trp	Met	Asn	Thr	Thr	Pro	Leu	Thr	Phe	Gln	Leu	Thr		
	290					295					300						
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Ser	Ser	Met	Thr	Phe	Gly	Asp	Gly	Tyr	Ser	Thr	Phe	Tyr	Pro	Leu	Val		
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cgt tac ttt gat cag cct tcg cgt gac ggc cgt tct atc gac cat gcg Arg Tyr Phe Asp Gln Pro Ser Arg Asp Gly Arg Ser Ile Asp His Ala 405 410 415			1308
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aaa ggc ttt gaa gtg ttt acc ctg gct aac caa ttg tac tgg aca gcg Lys Gly Phe Glu Val Phe Thr Leu Ala Asn Gln Leu Tyr Trp Thr Ala 450 455 460			1452
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 Lys Ala Glu Leu Met Val Arg Leu Asp Asp Asn Asn Gln Ala Gln Leu
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 Val Tyr Leu Val Asp Phe Phe Val Ala Glu Asp His Pro Ala Arg Pro
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 Gly Leu Asn His Ala Gln Ala Asp Gly Thr Gly Pro Gly Gly Asn Thr
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 Lys Thr Gly Arg Tyr Glu Tyr Gly Ser Asp Phe Pro Pro Phe Val Ile
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 Asp Lys Val Gly Thr Lys Cys Ser Met Asn Asn Thr Ala Val Arg Thr
 225 230 235 240
 Val Asp Leu Asn Gly Ser Thr Ser Gly Asn Thr Thr Tyr Ser Tyr Thr
 245 250 255
 Cys Asn Asp Ser Thr Asn Tyr Asn Asp Tyr Lys Ala Ile Asn Gly Ala
 260 265 270
 Tyr Ser Pro Leu Asn Asp Ala His Tyr Phe Gly Lys Val Val Phe Asp
 275 280 285

Met Tyr Lys Asp Trp Met Asn Thr Thr Pro Leu Thr Phe Gln Leu Thr
 290 295 300
 Met Arg Val His Tyr Gly Asn Asn Tyr Glu Asn Ala Phe Trp Asn Gly
 305 310 315 320
 Ser Ser Met Thr Phe Gly Asp Gly Tyr Ser Thr Phe Tyr Pro Leu Val
 325 330 335
 Asp Ile Asn Val Ser Ala His Glu Val Ser His Gly Phe Thr Glu Gln
 340 345 350
 Asn Ser Gly Leu Val Tyr Glu Asn Met Ser Gly Gly Met Asn Glu Ala
 355 360 365
 Phe Ser Asp Ile Ala Gly Glu Ala Ala Glu Phe Tyr Met Lys Gly Ser
 370 375 380
 Val Asp Trp Val Val Gly Ala Asp Ile Phe Lys Ser Ser Gly Gly Leu
 385 390 395 400
 Arg Tyr Phe Asp Gln Pro Ser Arg Asp Gly Arg Ser Ile Asp His Ala
 405 410 415
 Ser Asp Tyr Tyr Asn Gly Leu Asn Val His Tyr Ser Ser Gly Val Phe
 420 425 430
 Asn Arg Ala Leu Tyr Leu Leu Ala Asn Lys Ala Gly Trp Asp Val Arg
 435 440 445
 Lys Gly Phe Glu Val Phe Thr Leu Ala Asn Gln Leu Tyr Trp Thr Ala
 450 455 460
 Asn Ser Thr Phe Asp Glu Gly Gly Cys Gly Val Val Lys Ala Ala Ser
 465 470 475 480
 Asp Met Gly Tyr Ser Val Ala Asp Val Glu Asp Ala Phe Asn Thr Val
 485 490 495
 Gly Val Asn Ala Ser Cys Gly Ala Thr Pro Pro Pro Cys Gly Asp Val
 500 505 510
 Leu Glu Ile Gly Lys Pro Leu Ala Asn Leu Ser Gly Asn Arg Asn Asp
 515 520 525
 Met Thr Tyr Tyr Thr Phe Thr Pro Ser Ser Ser Ser Val Val Ile
 530 535 540
 Lys Ile Thr Gly Gly Thr Gly Asp Ala Asp Leu Tyr Val Lys Ala Gly
 545 550 555 560
 Ser Lys Pro Thr Thr Thr Ser Tyr Asp Cys Arg Pro Tyr Lys Tyr Gly
 565 570 575
 Asn Glu Glu Gln Cys Ser Ile Ser Ala Gln Ala Gly Thr Thr Tyr His
 580 585 590
 Val Met Leu Arg Gly Tyr Ser Asn Tyr Ala Gly Val Thr Leu Arg Ala
 595 600 605
 Asp

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US02/15905

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : C12N 9/52; D06M 16/00; C07K 14/28; C11D 3/386

US CL : 435/220, 262, 263, 264; 424/94.63; 510/114

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 435/220, 262, 263, 264; 424/94.63; 510/114

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

Please See Continuation Sheet

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X — A	US 4,865,983 A (DURHAM) 12 September 1989(12.09.1989), see entire document.	1-6, 11-12 ----- 7-10, 13-39
X — A	US 6,017,531 A (FORTNEY et al.) 25 January 2000(25.01.2000), see entire document, especially the examples.	1-6, 11-12 ----- 7-10, 13-39
X — A	US 5,505,943 A (FORTNEY et al.) 09 April 1996(09.04.1996), see entire document, especially the examples.	1-6, 11-12 ----- 7-10, 13-39
X — A	US 5,130,250 A (DEUTCH et al.) 14 January 1992(14.01.1992), see entire document.	1-5, 11-12 ----- 7-10, 13-39



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

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"X"

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y"

document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&"

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

15 November 2002 (15.11.2002)

Date of mailing of the international search report

28 MAR 2003

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US02/15905

C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X --- A	DAVID et al. Cloning, Sequencing, and Expression of the Gene Encoding the Extracellular Neutral Protease, Vibriolysin of Vibrio Proteolyticus. Gene, 01 March 1992, Vol. 112, No. 1, pages 107-112.	1-5, 11-12 ----- 7-10, 13-39

BOX II. OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION IS LACKING

This application contains the following inventions or groups of inventions which are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1. In order for all inventions to be searched, the appropriate additional search fees must be paid.

Group I, claim(s) 1-6, drawn to vibriolysin.

Group II, claim(s) 7-10, drawn to a method of sanitizing facility or instruments of prions with vibriolysin.

Group III, claim(s) 11-12, drawn to DNA encoding vibriolysin.

Group IV, claim(s) 13-24, drawn to formulation of vibriolysin in a prion-like structure.

Group V, claim(s) 25-39, drawn to a method of treating disease with a formulation of vibriolysin in a prion-like structure.

Groups III, IV and V of this application contain claims directed to more than one species of the generic invention. These species are deemed to lack unity of invention because they are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1.

In order for more than one species to be examined, the appropriate additional examination fees must be paid. The species are as follows:

Prion-like structures for the vibriolysin formulation species selected from:

- a) crosslinked crystals
- b) modified with agents to activate complement factors
- c) modified to enhance uptake by mannose receptors
- d) modified to increase passage across the blood brain barrier
- e) formulation that activates in response to a change in environment.

The claims are deemed to correspond to the species listed above in the following manner:

Claims 11-12 correspond to species (d) and (e), claims 13-39 correspond to species (a) to (e).

The following claim(s) are generic: 11, 13 and 25, for example.

The inventions listed as Groups I-V do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: The alleged special technical feature, vibriolysin is known in the art and therefore does not provide a contribution over the art.

The species listed above do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, the species lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: None of these species shares a special technical feature, they are each drawn to substantially different structural and functional embodiments of modification of the vibriolysin.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US02/15905

Continuation of B. FIELDS SEARCHED Item 3:

USPT

search terms: vibriolysin

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